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INTELLIGENCE REPORT

COUNTRY Iraq

DATE:

SUBJECT Tribal Unrest in North Iraq  
Mulla Mustafa:  
Road and Economic NotesThis document is hereby regraded to  
CONFIDENTIAL in accordance with the  
letter of 16 October 1978 from the  
Director of Central Intelligence to  
Archivist of the United States.  
Next Review Date: 2008

INFO. Prior 12 September 1946

DIST. 31 October 1946

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SUPPLEMENT

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25X1X6 Tribal Unrest

1. There was bloody fighting between the Shammar and Metaywit tribesmen in the district north of Jabal Sinjar about 1 August 1946. This fighting has now ceased, but many armed, mounted Arabs are still galloping about the plains.
2. The background of this trouble between the tribes dates back to the years after World War I, when Ajil, who was then the paramount sheikh of the Shammar Bedouins, was given the lands at the west end of the Jabal Sinjar by Tahir Ali of the Baghdad government (Governor of Upper Jazira). Ajil, as is customary for the landlord, collected taxes in kind; so much wheat, barley, etc., giving the people protection on his part, as well as the benefits which they derived from the attachment to the household of an important feudal chieftain. Ajil apparently never had trouble with the inhabitants, who are small land cultivators.
3. Since the death of Ajil, the Shammar tribe, and particularly the leadership of that tribe under the son of Ajil, Sfuq, is not what it was formerly, and the villagers have of late refused to pay taxes to the Shammar sheikh. The disturbing factor appears to be the Sabunchi family of Mosul, which held an interest in the villages before they were arbitrarily given to Ajil by the Baghdad government, and which, even after that, continued to draw quite an income from produce of the villages which it collected and sold. The Sabunchi family, which is a large and rich one, made up of merchants and political figures, has lived in Mosul for a great many years. The Sabunchis have lately been arming the villagers and sowing seeds of dissension which bore fruit when the Metaywit and Jehesh villagers refused to part with the traditional portion of their crops to Sfuq.
4. Sfuq, who has brains and knows his countrymen well, is not thought to be one who would precipitate the bloodshed that followed. However, his brother Ahmad, who is hotheaded, apparently led a band of armed Shammar tribesmen against the villages, in order to collect taxes or rent. The villagers were entrenched and well armed, and of the two hundred Shammar men who were reliably reported to have been in the first band of attackers, only two were not wiped out. The main band of the Shammar then came up (even Sheikh Dhaham of Syria is said to have sent 600 men), and by sheer weight of numbers rolled over the two villages of Metaywit and Jehesh, losing 300 more men in the process, but not leaving any known survivors. Total casualties were probably about 1200.

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5. Thereupon, the police interfered, threw Sfuq and a number of the other Shammar sheikhs in jail and are still patrolling the area. The fighting spread somewhat, and one of the small police posts north of Ain Zalah was wiped out, with the loss of nine men by the police, as well as the loss of all the arms and ammunition of the post. Sfuq was released from jail on 10 September.

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6. According to source, the Baghdad authorities hesitated to act in time to prevent the above trouble. Their sympathies are said to lie with the landlords and not with the villagers, who were wrong according to the law, but who have been very heavily assessed by the government and the landlords, as well as by crop assessors, tax assessors and the police, all of whom demand something from them, either money or crops.

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7. Source commented that two items in connection with the above information were of interest:

- (a) The fact that in the days of Sheikh Ajil, the Syrian and Iraqi Shammar tribesmen did not cooperate with one another;
- (b) The fact that many Bedouin tribal heads and their retainers are reported to be gathering in the vicinity of Aleppo in Syria. Source stated that this gathering might have some connection with the Shammar affair.

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Mulla Mustafa

8. A recent traveller in the Barzan-Bille area of the Barzani portion of Kurdistan reported that government funds were steadily flowing into the region, in order to keep the tribes quiet and to wean them from Mulla Mustafa Barzani. No rumors of the Mulla's return were heard, but there were reports that the government had invited his brother, Sheikh Ahmad, to come back to Iraq. Source commented that, if true, this would mean that the government had decided to try to split the Barzani tribe away from the stronger leader, Mulla Mustafa.

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Roads: Economic Notes

9. The road from Basra to Baghdad via Amara and Kut is in very bad shape, and will be impassable after one or two rains.

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10. The road from Baghdad to Kirkuk is good in spots, but the places which are washed-out wadi crossings will be intermittently impassable during the winter: no repairs to roads are being made.

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11. The price of tea in Kirkuk is \$13.00 per kilo; sugar is \$6.00 per lb. No rations have been issued for the past three months, but a small amount of the above was distributed during September.

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